

695. a. 8
*The STONE rejected by the Builders, ex-
alted as the Head-Stone of the Corner.*

A
SERMON
P R E A C H ' D

At the Opening of the Synod of
Perth and Stirling,

At *Perth*, October 10. 1732.

To which is subjoin'd

A SERMON preach'd *June 4th 1732,*
on the Sabbath Evening after the Sacra-
ment, from *Isa. ix. 6.* — *The Government*
shall be upon his Shoulder.

Both by Mr. EBENEZER ERSKINE, Minister of the
Gospel at *Stirling.*

Enter'd in Stationers-Hall.

E D I N B U R G H,

Printed for David Duncan, and sold at his House in the West-
Bow, and by several Book-sellers in Town; and at *Glasgow,*
Perth, Stirling, Dumfermline and Kirkcaldy. 1732.

which are the least-likely of the group.

SEYMOUR

T R E A T Y

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T E D A R

R E A D E R.

*THE following Sermon gave occasion to three days warm debate in the reverend Synod of Perth and Stirling, and has been the subject of much talk and speculation since that time, Whether the censures of men about it be just or unjust, is now submitted to the impartial world to judge. The sermon was copied from the author's original notes by another's hand, who could read his characters, but was in no hazard of making any additions or alterations. Several things here were omitted in the delivery for the sake of brevity: But nothing material delivered, but what comes abroad. And with reference to the quarrelled expressions, so soon as the author knew what passages of his discourse were pointed at by the reverend Synod (which was the day immediately after it was preached) he took care to revise his notes, and make these expressions run in the terms in which they were delivered, as near as either he or some of the audience could remember. And that the reader's curiosity may be satisfied, he will find these passages or sentences pointed at in the index at the foot. **

The author's design in pitching and preaching upon that text, was what he could to raise

* Page 14. line 5. to the End of the Period.

P. 17. line 14, 15, 16.

P. 20. line 13. to the End of the Period.

P. 26. line 12. to the End of the Period.

P. 38. line 10; from the foot.

P. 39. line 15, 16, &c.

P. 40. line 1. to near the close of the Page.

R E A D E R.

the Glory of the Blessed Corner-Stone, to set up the corruptions of the Jewish builders as so many beacons, that builders of our day might beware of them, and to cast in the small mite of his testimony against what to him appears an Injury done, either to Christ personal or mystical. If these ends be reached, either in the preaching or publication, it will afford matter of joy to the author, whatever be the event of the depending process with respect to himself.

If any think, upon the reading of the following discourse, that there is too great freedom used with respect to the present steps of defection; let them remember, that there is now no other way left to bear testimony against such things, but by warning the world against them, from press or pulpit; representations and petitions from ministers or church members at the bar being utterly disregarded, and no access to enter any protest or dissent against these proceedings in the publick records, for the exoneration of conscience, or the information of our posterity, that such things did not pass in our day without a struggle and testimony against them.

If any of the author's friends and well-wishers be afraid of further trouble to him, upon the account of this sermon; let them know, that through grace he chooses rather to suffer with the oppressed members of Christ, than enjoy all the ease and pleasure of those who oppress them in their spiritual liberties; which being the purchase of a Redeemer's Blood will be reckoned for before the scene be ended. Heb. xi. 24, 25, 26. 1 Joh. iii. 16. 2 Thess. i. 6, 7.



S E R M O N, &c.

ON

Psalm cxviii. 22. The Stone which the Builders rejected, the same is made the head stone of the Corner.



IT is probable this Psalm was penned by *David*, when the ark of God was brought up from the house of *Obed-Edom*, to its proper place in *Jerusalem*, after the intestine broils between the house of *David* and *Saul* had happily issued in *David's* promotion, by the common consent of all the tribes, to the crown and kingdom of *Israel*. But tho' this was the occasion, yet the Spirit of God had in it a further view, namely, to *Christ* himself, of whom *David* and his administrations in *Israel* were but a faint type and shadow.

David's accession to the throne was thro' many storms of opposition; although God had chosen and ordained him for the kingdom and

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government, yet he was opposed by the house of *Saul* and them who adhered to that family ; yet after all, the house of *David* prevailed. Just so was it with the son of *David*, our glorious Redeemer, hell and earth combined against the Lord and his *Messiah*, but God had determined, that the government should be upon his shoulders, that his King should be set upon his holy Hill of *Zion* ; and he carries his design against all Opposers as you see in my Text. *The stone which the builders rejected, the same is made the head stone of the corner.*

I need not stay to prove that these words are to be understood of Christ, after the express application that is made of them to him by himself and his apostles in the Scriptures of the New Testament, *Mat. xxi. 42. Acts iv. 7. Pet. ii. 7, 8. Eph. ii. 20.*

In the words we may notice the following particulars. 1. The metaphorical view in which the Church is here represented, namely that of a House or Building. 2. The character that our *Immanuel* bears, with respect to this Building ; he is *the Stone* in a way of eminence, without whom there can be no building, no house for God to dwell in, among the children of men. 3. The character of the workmen employed in this spiritual structure, they are called *Builders*. 4. A fatal Error they are charged with in building of the house of God ; they refuse the stone of God's choosing, they don't allow him a place in his own house. 5. Notice the Place that Christ should and shall have in this building, let the builders do their worst, he

he is made the head stone of the Corner. The words immediately following declare how this is effected, and how the saints are affected with the views of his exaltation; notwithstanding of the malice of hell and earth. *This is the Lord's doing, and it is wonderful in our eyes.*

In discoursing of this subject I shall just follow the Order of the Text now laid down, by explaining the particulars named, and then deduce a few inferences from the whole.

First, Let us take a view of the Church, under the Notion of a house or building. This metaphorical view of the Church is very frequent in the scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, *Isa. ii. 2, 3. It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established on the tops of the mountains, and many People shall say, come ye and let us go up to the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob.* The same way of speaking occurs also in the scriptures of the New Testament, *1 Cor. iii. 19. Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.* Hence Paul writing to Timothy, directs him how to behave himself in the Church of God which is the House of the living God.

Now with relation to this House or Building, I offer the particulars following. 1. That tho' God took up house with man at his creation; yet by the fall of Adam the family was skait, God broke up house with man, the family was parted, and the breach was wide like the Sea. God could have no fellowship with man;

for what fellowship could there be betwixt light and darkness, betwixt God and *Belial*; and immediately man, like the prodigal, forsook God, and wandered into a far country of sin and vanity.

2. God had a stated design from eternity, that notwithstanding of this breach, he would have a House and Dwelling with fallen man; he designed to take up house, and gather the family again; thence we are told, that *before the Foundation of the earth, he rejoiced in the habitable parts thereof, and his delights were with the sons of men.* The foundation of this building was laid in the council of peace, and all the stones and materials of it were sequestered and set apart; from the ancient years, of eternity, Christ was chosen as the foundation and the chief corner stone. *I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, ere ever the earth was:* And all the saints were elected as living stones to be renewed, justified, adopted, sanctified, and eternally saved in him and thro' him. *Eph. i. 3.* He hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, he hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children, to be holy and without blame before him in love.

3. Before this design'd building could go up, Heaven must be at an infinite expence; before one stone could be laid in the building, the glory of the infinite God must be vail'd with a vail of flesh in the person of the eternal Son, the great Lawgiver must be made under his own Law, God blessed for ever must be made a curse,

curse, and the holy One of God made sin. Justice had determined, that *without the shedding of blood, there should be no remission of sin*, and except justice was satisfied and the honour of the law repair'd, God could never dwell upon honourable terms with man upon earth. Oh the expence that God is at in building this House ! We must be redeem'd from the hand of Justice, *not with Silver or Gold, or such corruptible things, but with the precious Blood of Christ, &c.*

4. Every stone of this building is dig'd out of the deep and dark quarry of nature, being dead in trespasses and sins, children of wrath even as others, alienate from the life of God thro' ignorance, aliens to the commonwealth of *Israel*, strangers to the covenants of promise : In a word, there is not worse stuff in Hell itself, than the stones of this building are by Nature. And who can quarrel with the great Builder for taking one stone out of the quarry and leaving another behind him as he has amind : Only when we look to the rock whence we were hewen, and the pit whence we were dig'd, we may say who made us to differ, for a *Syrian* ready to perish was our father?

5. The great engine the glorious Builder makes use of, for gathering the stones of the building and carrying on the edifice, is the pure preaching of the everlasting Gospel; this is what the prophet *Isa. xxvii. 13.* foretells : *And it shall come to pass in that Day, That the great Trumpet shall be blown, and they that were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, shall come*

come and worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem. It pleases God, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. It is the Gospel that is the power of God unto Salvation, for therein is reveal'd the Righteousness of God from faith to faith, *Rom. i. 16.* When Christ sent forth his apostles and ministers, as founders of the New Testament Church, what were they to do? Their commission was to go unto all the world, and to preach the Gospel to every creature under heaven. *Go teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.* Hence the apostle declares, *Rom. x. 4.* the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty thro' God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth it self against the knowledge of God; and bringing into captivity every thought unto the obedience of Christ.

6. The church thus gathered and united under Christ as a glorious Head is the house of God, or his family upon earth. He has a manifold right unto her: A right by election, a right by redemption and purchase, a right by covenant and by possession. And if it is asked, what kind of a house is the church of God? I answer (1.) It is his dwelling-house, *Psal. lxxvi. 2. In Salem is his Tabernacle and his dwelling place is in Sion.* God has no other rest amongst the children of men than his church. *The Lord hath chosen Sion, he hath desired it for his habitation, this is my rest, here will I dwell;* so that the tabernacle of God is with men: And

as a man takes pleasure in his house or lodging, so doth God take pleasure in his church. The Lord taketh pleasure in his people, he will beautify the meek with salvation. *I will dwell in them, I will walk in them, and I will be unto them a father, and they shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord God Almighty.* (2.) The church is his treasure-house. Here it is that he disposes of his most valuable furniture he hath in the world. *Israel* is his peculiar treasure, the Lord's portion is his people, *Jacob* is the lot of his inheritance; here he hath his crown and diadem. Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Here he hath his jewels, as his people are called, *Mal. iii. 16.* In comparison of whom all the rest of the world are but trash. What is the chaff to the wheat saith the Lord? Before he loose his jewels and his portion, he will sacrifice nations and kingdoms, for their safety, *Isa. xliii. 4.* Ever since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: Therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life, *Egypt* for thy ransom and *Aethiopia* and *Seba* for thee. (3.) The church is his banqueting-house, *Cant. ii. 4.* *He brought, me into his banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love.* Here it is he makes unto all people (in the external dispensation of the gospel) a feast of fat things, of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, wines on the lees well refined: And here it is that the souls of believers are entertained with meat

meat and drink indeed, the hidden *Manna* and the fruits of the tree of life: And here it is that he himself is entertained with the graces of his own Spirit, *Cant. v. 1. I am come into my garden, I have gathered my myrrh with my spices, I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey, I have drunk my wine with my milk.* Thus I say the church is the house of the living God.

8. As the church is the house of God or his family, so Christ is the only door of the house, *Joh. x. 9. I am the door; by me, if any man enter, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture, and he that entereth not by the door into the sheep fold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.* No man can be reckoned a member of the church, far less a minister, no not in the judgment of charity, except he make a credible profession of his faith in Christ, and have a corresponding walk and conversation; and he that comes into the house of God, and lays claim to the privileges of the church without it, the master of the house in his own time will say to him, *friend how camest thou in hither*; and they who adventure to confer the privileges of the church upon these who have not come in by the door, Christ, and who in the view of the world, are of a malignant spirit, enemies to the house of our God; these, I say, are guilty of casting that which is holy unto dogs, and of betraying the house of God, instead of ruling to advantage.

2. Although this house or building, be the object of the malice of hell and earth, yet, as it has stood since 'tis first erection in *Paradise*, so it shall stand while sun and moon endures in the firmament. Indeed particular churches may be raz'd, but the catholick, universal church shall stand the utmost efforts of the gates of hell; the Lord is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; *the Lord will help her and that right early*: Hence is that song, *Psal. xli. — We will not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, &c.* All the storms that have blown upon her from hell and earth, have only served, by over-ruling providence, to advance her true interest and glory, *Isa. liv. 11, 12. Ob thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted; behold I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with Sapphires. And I will make thy windows of Agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.*

The Second thing proposed was to speak a little here of the character given unto Christ, with relation to this building; he is *the Stone*. There are a great many stones in a building, but in this spiritual building of the house of God, Christ is *the Stone*, in a way of eminence and excellence, as if the whole building were of one piece, intimating that Christ and his church are so closely united as to become one body and one spirit; upon this account the whole building is called by the name of *Christ*, as the principal part thereof, *1 Cor. xii. 12. As*

the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body, so also is Christ. So Jer. xxxiii. 16.—And this is the name wherewith she shall be called, viz. the church, The Lord our righteousness. The very name given unto Christ himself, *Chap. xxiii. ver. 6.* I conceive that Christ is called the Stone here, for the same reason, that he else where calls himself a Rock, *Upon this Rock will I build my church*, to intimate that he is the strength and stability of his church. Now the excellency and necessity of this Stone, to the reering and building of the house of God, will appear if we consider,

1. That he is the Stone of God's chusing. *2 Pet. i. 4. Chosen of God and precious. Isa. xlii. 1. Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth. Fore-ordained before the foundation of the world.*

2. He is the Stone of God's approbation. *Tho' he be disallowed of men*, he had his Father's testimony from heaven, with an audible voice, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased:* And as he is approved of God, so he is approven of by every wise builder; they'll be ready to say with *Paul, This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came into the world to save sinners.*

3. He is the stone of God's trying. *Isa. xxviii. 16. I lay in Zion a stone, a tryed stone;* he was tryed in the furnace of his Father's wrath, and he abode the tryal; for he came forth more glorious than ever, in his resurrection from the dead. He stood the trial of the

rage of men and devils, who endeavoured to stop him in his redeeming work. All the saints in heaven, and all believers on earth, have tried him, and will give him this testimony, That he is able to save to the uttermost.

4. He is the only living and life-giving stone, 1 Pet. ii. 4. *To whom coming as to a living stone.* As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself. He is the resurrection and the life, and all the stones of the building derive their life from him. 1 Pet. ii. 5. *Ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house. He that hath the Son hath life; our life is hid with Christ in God.*

5. He is the stone that is laid by the hand of Jehovah as a foundation in Zion. *Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a sure foundation,* Isa. xxviii. 16. He was laid decretively from eternity; He is laid doctrinally and declaratively in a preached Gospel. And he is laid efficaciously in a day of power, when the sinner is by the power of the eternal spirit determined to take hold upon him by faith; he is laid as a foundation, and the only foundation of hope and help for perishing sinners. Men have been trying in all ages to lay other foundations, but still they have proven foundations of sand, another foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, Christ Jesus. They who attempt to rear a church without Christ, or to build up to themselves a hope of salvation without him, have only built castles in the air, and their building always turned to nought.

god. He is the matchless and incomparable stone, for he is *the chief stone of the corner*, the brightness of his Father's glory is in him, and the express image of his Person. All created glory shrinks into nothing and darkness, when he appears, for he is fairer than the children of men, as the apple tree among the trees of the wood; and he casts a lustre and glory on the whole building, and every stone in it, for we are beautiful thro' his comeliness; the beauty of the Lord is upon his saints.

The *Third* Thing to be discoursed a little, was of the workmen employed in rearing this spiritual building or fabrick of the church, here call'd *Builders*. Christ himself is the principal builder to whom the work is committed, *Zech. vi. 12. Behold the Man whose name is the Branch, he shall come out of his place, and build the Temple, even he shall build the Temple and bear the glory.* But he employs officers under him for the oncarrying of the work, and these are called builders. Kings, and those in civil authority, when in their sphere they lend their helping hand to advance and carry on the work of God, may be called builders of the church; but under the New Testament I find this term only apply'd to ministers of the gospel, ordinary or extraordinary, *Eph. iv. 11, 12. He gave some Apostles and Prophets, and some Evangelists and some Pastors and Teachers.* For what end? *It is for the edification of the church, or building the Body of Christ; and 2 Cor. iii. 10. Paul declareth there, that according to the grace given him, he, as a wise master-builder, had laid the foundation,*

dation. So that ministers of the gospel are especially the New Testament builders.

Now with relation to these, there are only these few things I suggest. 1. 'Tis a very honourable employment, to be a builder of the house of God ; it is an employment wherein the Son of God as mediator is engag'd ; and is it not an honour, to be co-workers with him ? *David esteem'd it an honour to be a door keeper in the house of our God ; but it is yet more so to be a builder of the house.* And as the work is honourable, so the reward of grace is proportioned ; for if we keep the charge committed to us in building the house of God, we shall have place among them that stand by the heavenly throne, and they that be wise, shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.

2. None can warrantably lay a stone in this building, except he be regularly called. What Mason will put his hand to a building, unless he be employed by these who have warrant to call him ? This is such a necessary circumstance, that Christ himself would not meddle with building his Father's house till he had his Father's call. *No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.* So likewise Christ glorified not himself, to be made an high priest, but he that said to him, *thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,* Heb. v. 4, 5. There is a twofold Call necessary for a man who meddles as a builder in the Church of God, there is the Call of God, and

of the Church. God's Call consists, in his qualifying a man for the work, and inspiring him with a holy zeal and desire, to employ these qualifications for the glory of God and the good of his church. The Call of the Church lies in the free choice and election of the christian people. The promise of conduct and counsel in the choice of men that are to build the church is not made to patrons, heritors, or any other particular set of men, but to the church, the body of Christ, to whom apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are given. As it is a natural privilege of every house or society of men to have the choice of their own servants or officers, so 'tis the privilege of the house of God in a particular manner. What a miserable bondage would it be reckoned for any family to have stewards or servants imposed upon them by strangers or enemies, who might give the children of the family *a stone for bread, or a scorpion instead of a fish*, and poison instead of medicine? And shall we suppose, that ever God granted to any set of men, patrons, heritors, elders, or whatever they be, a power to impose servants on his family, without their consent, being the freest society in the world? But I pass this at present; perhaps more of it may occur afterwards.

3. The builders of the house of God are not left to form or mould the house according to their own fancy; no, but they must follow the pattern shewed in the holy mount of divine revelation. When the tabernacle was reared, a platform of it was given to *Moses*.
When

When the temple was to be built, a pattern of it was given to *Solomon* by his father, and every pin of the tabernacle, and every stone of the temple was to be regulated and dispos'd according to the divine order: Now these were but types of the new testament building, whereof we now speak. Who builds a house without forming a plan of it to the builders? Who erects a society without giving orders about its government? They who assert the government of the church to be ambulatory, cast a reflection on the wisdom of God, which is not to be supposed of any wise man whatever. Now I say as builders of a house must renounce their own schemes, and follow the orders of the owner, so ministers and church officers in building the house of God, must renounce carnal policy and the wisdom of the world, and follow the orders given by God in his word, the perfect rule of faith and manners, both to ministers and church members. What the particular model of the church should be, is a thing I hope beyond controversy amongst us, who are so solemnly engag'd to maintain the doctrine, discipline, worship and government of this church; and therefore I don't enter upon it now.

4. God has endowed men whom he calls to build his house, with different talents and abilities, according to the different services they are to be employed about in the work. There are a great variety of gifts bestowed by Christ upon his ministers, all calculate for the good of the church of God in general: The apostle illustrates this

this argument at great length 1 Cor. xii. thro' the whole of the chapter. If this were but duly considered, it would cure all manner of strife and emulation among the builders, that they should not grudge one against another.

5. The Gifts of men, however edifying or well adapted, for carrying on the work, will never do service without the blessing and countenance of the great Master Builder. *Paul may plant, and Appollos water, but God giveth the increase;* and 'tis well that it is so ordered of infinite wisdom, that men may not give greater glory to instruments than is due, and that the whole glory may redound to the Lord; for this end, he puts the treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of him.

6. The work of God is many times exceedingly marred, thro' the weakness or wickedness of pretended builders. But this leads me to the

Fourth Thing proposed, which was to speak of the fatal error of these builders spoken of in my text: They rejected the stone, without which their whole building was nothing, but a medley of confusion, however glorious it might appear in their own eyes. *The stone is rejected by the builders.*

They seem'd to have a great zeal for the Messiah and his kingdom; yet when he comes, they don't allow him a room in his own house. *He came to his own, and his own received him not,* and so they fulfilled *Isaiab's* prediction of him, *Isa liii. 2. He hath no form or comeliness in him, when we shall see him there is no beauty*

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why we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men. And because they rejected him, he hath rejected them as a church and nation; and oh! how happy had it been if their error and ruin thereupon had served as a beacon to other churches since their day, not to dash upon the same rock. But here a question naturally arises.

How did the *Jewish* builders reject the stone which God had ordained to be the chief stone of the corner? *Answer*, This came about through a great many corruptions which they introduced both in principle and in practice. I shall only name a few of them, and leave it to every one to judge how far such evils or corruptions are to be found in our own day.

1. Tho' they pretended a great regard unto the holy law of God, and cry'd out upon Christ and his apostles as enemies to it, yet they narrowed and contracted the sense and meaning of it, confining it merely to the letter, without searching into its extent and spirituality, which gave occasion unto Christ's sermon on the mount. By these means, tho' their hearers might have some notions of moral honesty, yet could they have no notion of the depravation of nature, and of the deceit and desperate wickedness of their hearts, without which no man can ever know the need he has of the work of regeneration, or of a Saviour from sin.

2. Having pared off the spiritual meaning of the law, they sought justification by the works thereof, and thought a man's own personal obedience enough to recommend him to God; as is

clear from Rom. ix. 31. *Israel which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained unto the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone. And Rom. x. 3. For they being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.* They could frame no notion to themselves of justification by the imputed righteousness of the *Messiah*; tho' God had told them that their righteousness, and their works could not profit them, that it was a bed too short and a covering too narrow for them.

These builders, thro' the legality of their doctrine, shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; they would neither enter themselves, nor suffer others that were entering to enter. God had told them that the blessings of his covenant must be had without money, or price, but they would needs pawn their legal qualifications upon God, and barter the matter with him; and thus instead of casting out the stones, or preparing the way of the people, *Isa. lxiii. 10.* they threw stones and stumbling blocks in the way of the salvation of sinners by the *Messiah*.

These builders deadened the ordinances of God by their formality. Tho' they retained the shell of ordinances, they never regarded the end, either with respect to their own souls, or the souls of their people, which was fellowship and communion with God therein; for

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which reason God declareth his abhorrence of his own institutions, *Isa. i. 11, 12. &c.* *To what purpose are the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats, &c.* One of the great sources of this evil was, that if a man had been trained up at the feet of *Gamaliel* for a few years, and got a smack of the learning then in vogue, it was enough in their opinion to qualify him for being a builder in the house of God, tho' in the mean time he was an utter stranger to the work of grace on his soul; as is evident from the instance of *Nicodemus*, who when Christ tries him upon the head of regeneration, he bables and speaks nonsense. *John iii. 4.* *How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's belly and be born.* Hence is that sharp challenge, *ver. 9.* *Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things.* There Christ speaks of it as a thing criminal, that men should be made teachers in the church, who were strangers to a work of grace; for what but dead, formal worship could be performed by men *dead in trespasses and sins.*

5. They were continually dabling in politicks, gave themselves up to the conduct of carnal wisdom and policy in the matters of God and of his church, and thro' this carnal wisdom, they were led on to crucify the Lord of glory. *'Tis expedient that one man die for the people; and if he be not taken out of the way, the world*

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doctrine, shut up the kingdom of heaven against
men; they would neither enter themselves, nor
suffer others that were entering to enter. God had
told them that the blessings of his covenant must
be had without money, or price, but they would
needs pawn their legal qualifications upon God,
and barter the matter with him; and thus instead
of casting out the stones, or preparing the way of
the people, *Isa. lxiii. 10.* they threw stones and
stumbling blocks in the way of the salvation of
sinners by the *Messiah*.

14. These builders deadened the ordinances of
God by their formality. Tho' they retained
the shell of ordinances, they never regarded
the end, either with respect to their own souls,
or the souls of their people, which was fellow-
ship and communion with God therein; for
which

which reason God declareth his abhorrence of his own institutions, *Isa. i. 11, 12. &c. To what purpose are the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats, &c.* One of the great sources of this evil was, that if a man had been trained up at the feet of *Gamaliel* for a few years, and got a smack of the learning then in vogue, it was enough in their opinion to qualify him for being a builder in the house of God, tho' in the mean time he was an utter stranger to the work of grace on his soul; as is evident from the instance of *Nicodemus*, who when Christ tries him upon the head of regeneration, he bables and speaks nonsense. *John iii. 4. How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's belly and be born.* Hence is that sharp challenge, *ver. 9. Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things.* There Christ speaks of it as a thing criminal, that men should be made teachers in the church, who were strangers to a work of grace; for what but dead, formal worship could be performed by men *dead in trespasses and sins.*

5. They were continually dabling in politicks, gave themselves up to the conduct of carnal wisdom and policy in the matters of God and of his church, and thro' this carnal wisdom, they were led on to crucify the Lord of glory. *'Tis expedient that one man die for the people; and if he be not taken out of the way, the world*

will go after him, and so the Romans shall come and take away our kingdom! When once a church comes to stand upon the rotten prop of carnal wisdom and policy, she's near unto ruin. 'Tis true, ministers are to be wise as serpents; but the wisdom of the serpent will soon lead us off our feet unto pernicious courses, if not attended with the simplicity of the dove; and therefore we need, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we should have our conversation in this world.

6. The *Jewish* builders valued themselves exceedingly upon their connection with the rulers and great folk of that day, and having join'd interests with them, treated the common people, especially those who owned Christ, and attended his ministry and that of his apostles, as an unhallowed mob; as is clear from *John vii.* from *ver. 45.* and downward, where they having sent some of their officers to apprehend Christ, the officers return, declaring that *never man spoke like this man*; to which the pharisees reply, *Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or pharisees believed on him? But this people who know not the law are accursed.* As if the common people had been obliged to follow them, and the rulers with whom they connect themselves, by an implicate faith and obedience, without ever bringing their doctrine and actions to the bar of the law and testimony, to be tried there.

7. They and the rulers having got the ascendant in the sanedrim, and other courts, they took care to keep the power upon their side, by
bringing

bringing in none but men of their own stamp and spirit, and if any man adventured to open his mouth, or testify against their corruptions in principle or practice, presently combinations are form'd, plots are laid, and the edge of the church's discipline, which they had grasped, is turned against them as a turbulent person, an enemy to the law and temple ; as is clear from their management with Christ, his apostles and the protomartyr *Stephen*. But yet notwithstanding of their pretended regard to the temple, they admitted the buyers and sellers to enter into it, whereby they turned that holy place into a den of thieves, as Christ tells them to their face, *John* ii. 16. and *Matt.* xxi. 13. and whatever regard they pretended to the law, by a shew of sanctity before the world, yet they abandoned themselves to all manner of secret and heart wickedness; hence our Lord compares them unto *painted sepulchres*, glorious without, but within full of dead mens bones and rottenness, *Mat.* xxiii. 27.

Again, However careful they were to clock and palliate their secret wickedness, yet now and then it was breaking out, to the great scandal and offence of the poor people of God, by which means they made themselves contemptible, and caused many to stumble at the law, and abhor the sacrifices of the Lord, as administer by them. As is plain from *Mal.* ii. 8, 9. *Ye are departed out of the way, ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. Therefore have I also made you con-*
temp-

despicable and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.

Having lost the hearts of the people by these means, they gave themselves up to all manner of sloth and indolence, taking care to feed their own bellies, and enrich themselves with the good of this world, while in the mean time they entirely neglected the flock and heritage of God. Hence is that charge against them, by the prophet Isaiah lvi. 10, 11. His watch-men are blind, they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs, which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand. They all look to their own way, for his gain, every one from his quarter: Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill our selves with strong drink, and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.

Those Jewish rulers ruled the Lord's people with rigour, invaded their freedoms and liberties, bound heavy burdens on them, which they themselves would not touch with one of their fingers; and by this means the Lord's people were scattered from the worship of God in their synagogues, as sheep having no shepherd. Hence is that plain dealing, by the prophet Ezekiel xxxiv. from ver. 2. to 6. Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds, Wo be to the shepherds of Israel, that do feed themselves; should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that

are fed, but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them, and they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered thro' all the mountains, and upon every high hill, yea my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.

In short, to such a degree of corruption were they arrived, that the holy and prophane, the clean and unclean were alike to them, provided they were of their way and party. Ezek. xxii. 25, 26. *There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls, they have taken the treasure and precious things, they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. Her priests have violated (as in the original, offered violence) to my law, and have profaned mine holy things; they have put no difference between the holy and prophane; neither have they shew'd difference between the unclean and the clean.*

Thus the Jewish church, and particularly her pretended builders, we see were sunk into the very dregs of corruption; and hence it came, that when the glorious and long-looked for Messiah actually appeared among them, upon the stage of

of this world, instead of giving him a reception suitable to his excellency, as *Immanuel* God Man, they treated him with the utmost contempt. Tho' he opened his commission, and made it evident to the world, by his doctrine, miracles, and the whole of his conversation, that he was none other than the brightness of his Father's glory, yet they disparaged his person, denied his supreme Deity, esteeming him only as the son of the carpenter; contradicted his doctrine, and studied to obscure his miracles, by ascribing them to the power of *Belzebub*, the prince of devils: They blackned his character with reproaches, as tho' he had been a glutton, a wine biber, a friend of publicans and sinners, and at length crucified him ignominiously, as tho' he had been a notorious impostor, betwixt two thieves, and when, after his resurrection from the dead, he came to them in the ministry of his apostles, bringing his righteousness and salvation near unto them, they finally rejected him and all the offers of his grace; for which reason, God was provoked, by a heavy sentence of excommunication, to cut them off from being a church or nation, under which they are lying to this day, his blood being *upon them and upon their children*, according to their wish at his crucifixion. And thus we see how the stone of God's chusing was *rejected by the builders*. Let their example and ruin serve as so many beacons, that we of the *Gentile* churches may not dash our selves upon the same church-ruining and soul-destroying rocks, which is the very use the apostle *Paul* makes of this subject, when
writing

writing to the Romans, Chap. xi. ver. 20, 21, 22. *Well, because of unbelief, they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee: Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: On them which fell, severity; but towards thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: Otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.* Which melancholy event actually happened unto the church of Christ at Rome, as we see, at this very day, it being now the seat of anti-christ, and a synagogue of satan.

The only thing remains upon this head, is to answer the following question.

Whence was it that the Jewish builders rejected Christ, the stone of God's chusing, trying and laying? *Ans* 1. This fatal error of theirs proceeded from their ignorance of Christ, in the excellency of his person, and of the glorious mystery of redemption and salvation through him, *Acts* iii. 17. *I wot that thro' ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers; 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8. We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.* They were men of no despicable parts, capable enough to toss an argument; they thought themselves the only seers in Israel in their day, *Are we blind also?* Yet Christ declares them blind like moles, in things relating to his kingdom. The least of Christ's babes, whom they reckoned among the accursed mob, had

more of the saving knowledge of God, and of the things of God, than they; and the blind leading the blind both stumbled on the stumbling-stone, and fell into the ditch together. 2. Mistaken notions of the nature of the *Messiah's* kingdom was another cause of their rejecting this precious Stone. They had formed a notion to themselves, without any real ground from scripture prophecy, that the *Messiah* was to appear in the form of an earthly monarch, and that he was to lift up the head of the *Jewish* nation, and make the *Romans*, and all the nations of the world, their vassals and tributaries; but finding themselves mistaken, they disown and crucify him, as an impostor. Which by the by, serves to discover what a dangerous thing it is, not to have right conceptions of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom. I'm perswaded that carnal notions of the kingdom of Christ, which is not of this world, ly at the bottom of many of the evils and corruptions of the day we live in.

The *Fifth* thing in the method was to enquire what may be implied in Christ's being *made the head-stone of the corner*, notwithstanding of the attempts of the builders, to juggle him out of his place?

1. Then, it implies Christ's exaltation and victory over all his enemies and opposers; he will have the better of them, let them do their worst: However Christ and his cause, interest and people, may be born down for a while, yet the scales will turn, and like the house of *David* they shall prevail. Christ was personally oppressed and afflicted, *he drank of the*
brook

brook in the way. Yet at length be lifted up the head and God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name. And as it was with Christ personal, so will it be with his injured members. However they be afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted, yet God will lay their stones with fair colours and their foundations with Sapphires. Tho' Sion may be laid in ashes, yet she shall be built up again by the mighty God: And when the Lord brings her forth to the light, then Shame shall cover her who said, Where is the Lord thy God.

2. It implies, that God has a great regard for the glory of his Son, as the head and king of his church, and that it is his will that *all Men should honour him, as they honour the Father.* This was intimated by a royal mandate, issued forth from the excellent glory. *This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.* God does not reckon it any injury done to him as God-Creator, that we worship and serve him in the person of the Redeemer, for *his name is in him*; his glory, majesty and other excellent perfections are in him as they are in the father, and therefore it is his will, *That at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

3. It implies, that the whole spiritual fabric or building of the Church hangs upon him, as the superstructure leans upon the foundation and chief corner-stone. *He shall build the temple and bear the glory,* says the prophet Zechariah,

riah, and *Isa. xxii. 24. They shall hang upon him all the glory of his Father's house.* All the doctrines of the church, and truths of the everlasting Gospel lean upon him: He is their *Alpha and Omega.* Hence we read of *the truth as it is in Jesus*, they meet in him as the spokes of a wheel in the Nive. All the promises meet in him, *they are in him yea and amen.* All the precepts lean upon his authority, for the law is the law of Christ, it is his *yoke and burden.* The whole discipline of the church hangs upon him: The keys of doctrine and discipline hang at his girdle. The government of the church pertains to him; for it is laid upon his shoulders. The ordinances and worship of the church hang on him; no sort of worship or part of worship can be admitted, but what bears the impression of his institution. The officers of the church hang upon him for their commission and success in their work. In a word, all the members of the church hang upon him. *The whole offspring and issue, the vessels of small quantity, from vessels of cups to vessels of flacons, hang on him, as upon a nail fastned in a sure place.*

4. His being made the head-stone of the corner implies, that he is the alone center of unity in the church, for the head-stone of the corner knits the whole building together, and if that be removed, the walls of the house fall asunder, and so the whole fabrick is ruined. If we don't hold the head stone of the corner, by which *the whole building is supplied and knit together*, the fabrick of a church, however politically fram'd, can never stand long. And the reason
why

why the house is tottering at this day, is because there is too much of a receding from the corner stone. Usually indeed in a time of defecti-
 on, the pulpits of these builders whose hands are deepest in it, ring with the doctrine of peace; and if a tongue be moved against the corrupt mea-
 sures they are going into, the cry is raised, *These that turn the world upside down, are come hither also*; while in the mean time, it is such as depart from the corner-stone, that ruin and tear the building, and not they who give warning to the house or family of its being in danger of falling. They who do give warn-
 ing may lay their account to be beaten by their fellow builders, that are loosing the corner-stone: But this needs be no surprise, for in all ages Christ's witnesses have tormented them that dwell upon the earth; and it needs be no discouragement, for tho' they may be killed and buried; yet there will be a resurrection both of names and per-
 sons.

5. His being the head-stone of the corner im-
 plies, that Christ is the beauty and ornament of his church, for much of the beauty and ornament of the building lies in the corner-stone: We are told, that *the daughters of Zion were like a corner-stone polished after the similitude of a palace. Christ is the glory of his people Israel, and no wonder, for he is the brightness of his Father's glory.* When he is in the midst of his church, countenancing his ordinances and judicatories, then it is, *she looks forth as the morning, fair as the sun, clear as the moon,*
 and

and terrible as an army with banners : But when he departs, all the glory departs, and a dismal *Ichabod* succeeds ; *Yea wo also unto them when I depart from them :* As may be seen at this day in the once famous churches of Lesser *Asia*, and other places, where Christ had once flourishing Churches. They departed from the chief corner-stone in doctrine, discipline, worship and government, and this provoked him to depart, and upon his departure the songs of their temples were turned into howlings.

6. It implies, that they who would build the church of Christ, must still have him in their eye, and that the whole of their conduct and administration in the house of God must be regulate with a view to his glory and honour. If in building a house, the chief corner-stone be not kept in view, irregular work can't miss to ensue ; Just so is it in the case in hand ; if we shall pretend to build the house of God, and do not keep our eyes on Christ, and his honour and interest, whether in matters of discipline or doctrine, instead of building the church, we do but disorder and disturb it, and throw all into confusion ; when we begin to work by carnal policy, or to have a squint eye upon serving the lusts and humours of men, great or small, or our own worldly interests, and not the glory of our great Redeemer, we but ruin and pull down the church of Christ, instead of building it, and are fair to bury our name, our ministry, and our own souls, and the souls of multitudes, in the rubbish of it. Therefore there is much need of disinterested views in the management
of

of the affairs of Christ. We that are ministers, as well as others, had much need to learn the lesson of self-denial : To deny our own wisdom and our worldly interest as a trifle in respect of his glory, and the advancement of his kingdom.

7. The Text implies that God and corrupt builders are driving quite different measures and designs. The builders reject the stone, but God will have it to be the head-stone of the corner, and which of the parties shall prevail, 'tis easy to judge. *Christ shall sit at his Father's right hand, till all his enemies be made his footstool.* He will break them that rise up against him, *as a potter's vessel.* *I have set my King,* says the Lord, *upon my holy hill of Sion ;* and who is he that will dethrone him ?

What was last proposed in the method was the *application* of the whole. All the use I shall make of what has been said, shall be wrapt up in the following Inferences.

First, From what has been said, we may see the excellency of the church of Christ ; why she is a building and house for God to dwell in, among the children of men. So valuable is this building, that this whole visible creation is only as a theatre or scaffold for rearing the house, and whenever the building is completed, the scaffold will be taken down and committed to the flames. To discover the high estimate God puts upon his church, he calls her by the most endearing names and epithets. He designs her *his spouse, his love, his dove,*
his

his undefiled, his treasure, his portion, his Hephzibah and Beulah, his bed, his resting place, his walking place, and his dwelling place. A whole Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost lay themselves out in their particular œconomy for the up-building of this house: The grace of the Father, the love and blood of the Son, and all the gracious influences and operations of the Holy Ghost are laid out for carrying on the work. The whole administrations of providence in the government of the world are adjusted for the benefit of the church, and the faithful members thereof. For this end the reins of administration, the keys of hell and death, were committed into the hands of Christ; *For God hath given him to be head over all things unto the church, which is his body.* The Father hath put all things into the hand of the Son, that so all the wheels of providence might be roll'd, and turn'd about for the good of them that love him, and who are the called according to his purpose. The whole Institution and administration of gospel-ordinances, and all the officers of his ordination, whether ordinary or extraordinary, are design'd for her edification, as we see in that forecited, *Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13, &c.* This may let us see, what a valuable trust we have among our hands, to whom God has committed the affairs of the church, and how tenderly it concerns us to manage them, even like those who are to make an account to the great Lord of the house.

Inf. 2. Is Christ the stone in a way of eminence? Then we may see how necessary and use-

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ful it is to preach Christ; why, he is *the stone* by way of eminence, the stone of God's laying, of his choosing, and the stone which God will have for *the head-stone of the corner*. Paul as a wise master-builder laid this foundation among his hearers, and declares that *another foundation can no Man lay*. It is Christ whom we preach. *I desire, says he, to know nothing among you, but Christ and him crucified*. The whole of the scripture-revelation meets in him as its centre: All the histories, prophecies, promises, types, precepts, doctrines and ordinances of the word, they are just full of Christ. The whole bible, what is it, but the Testament of Christ and the Testimonial that Christ brought from Heaven. *These are they that testify of me. These things are written that ye may believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in him*. And to be sure what is the scope of the whole revelation of the mind of God in the word, ought to be the scope and design of all our sermons. Whatever particular doctrines we insist upon, ought still to be grafted upon the blessed Branch that springs out of the Root of *Jesse*, for the truth is only right dispensed, and right known, as it is in Jesus. Hence the great Mr. *Durham* tells us, in his first Sermon on *Isa. liii.* 'That Christ stands under a fourfold relation to preaching, 1. He is the Text of it; all preaching is to explain him, and that preaching that does not stand in relation to him, is a preaching besides the text. 2. He is the ground-work and foundation of

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' preach-

' preaching, so that preaching without him wants
 ' a foundation, and is but building castles in the
 ' air. 3. He is the great end of preaching,
 ' namely to set him on high in the hearts and
 ' affections of our hearers. The design of preach-
 ' ing is not to make our selves, but our master,
 ' great, to cause his name to be remembred. 4.
 ' He is the very power and life of preaching, for
 ' *he is the power of God and the wisdom of God;*
 ' and the Gospel is called *the power of God unto*
 ' *salvation, because therein is revealed the right-*
 ' *eousness of God from faith to faith.* Thus far
 ' that great man.

Inf. 3. If the Ministers of the gospel be build-
 ers of the house, then see hence the need of
 trying a man's acquaintance with Christ and the
 power of Religion, before he is admitted unto
 ministerial communion, as a fellow-builder in
 the house of God. Why, that man who is not
 really acquainted with Christ in an experimen-
 tal way, may be fair to reject the stone of
 God's chusing, and so ruine the building, and bu-
 ry himself and many souls in the ruins of it.
 Masons know one another, they have certain
 signs and words by which they are capable to
 distinguish men of their own art and business
 from others; so skillful builders, in the house of
 God are capable, by a spiritual discerning, to know
 who are fit for being admitted to the work of
 the Lord, and who not. If such a discerning be
 given even unto church members, as to *try the*
spirits, whether they be of God, because many
false prophets are gone abroad in the world,
 1 John iv. 1. much more may it be supposed,
 that

that this discerning faculty is to be found among faithful ministers of the Gospel. Hence is that of the Apostle to *Timothy*, 2 Epistle ii. 2. *The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*

Inf. 4. Is it so that the stone is rejected by the builders? Then see hence what a fatal and pernicious thing a corrupt, erroneous and ignorant ministry is to the church of Christ: Why, they spoil, mar and destroy the whole building; they run counter to the great plot of heaven, by casting away the stone, which God has ordained to be the chief-stone of the corner. The new mode of preaching some men have fallen into, with their harangues and flourishes of morality, while Christ is scarce named, from the beginning to the end of their discourse, I look on as a plot of hell to throw out the corner-stone, in order to bring us back into heathenish or antichristian darkness. *Christ is the light of the world*, and if he be removed, or shuffled out, where are we, but just among *the dark places of the Earth, which are full of the habitations of horrid cruelty*? So that I say, a corrupt ministry, whatever be their fine parts, are the very bane of the church of Christ.

Infer. 5. If it be God's great design, that Christ should be the chief stone of the corner; if this I say, be the Resolution of heaven: Then see hence, that all the attempts of hell for the depressing of Christ, and the ruine of his cause, whether by open enemies, or pretended builders,

shall be abortive in the issue. *For the counsel of the Lord shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure, in spite of hell and earth.* And what is his pleasure and counsel? Why, here it is. *The stone which the builders rejected, the same shall become the head-stone of the corner.*

The gates of hell have made many an attempt to get the stone of God's chusing rejected, in order to the ruine of the church, but they have never yet prevailed, and never shall: Infinite Wisdom hath always taken *the wise in their own craftiness, and turned the counsel of the froward headlong*, and made these very devices of hell and its instruments subservient to lift the corner-stone higher in the building, to the shame and ruin of these who attempted to reject it. *This little stone cut out of the mountain*, hath always prov'd too hard for all the mettals that clast with it, and it will be so to the end of time.

Infer. 6. See from what is said, what it is makes a flourishing Church. It is not her external peace, plenty or prosperity; not her connection in politicks with kings or parliaments, patrons, heretors, or any other set of men; but her connection with the chief corner-stone. This and this only is what beautifies the whole building, and makes her *increase with the increase of God*.

Infer. 7. See hence great ground of lamentation and humiliation at this day. The stone is rejected, which God would have to be the chief stone of the corner: Is he not rejected in his propheticall office thro' the prevailing ignorance

norance and unbelief, that is to be found among the hearers of the gospel? The old complaint may still be renewed in our day, *Who hath believed our report?* Is he not rejected in his priestly Office, while the generality, with the *Jews*, go about to establish their own righteousness, and refuse the righteousness of God? And is he not rejected in his kingly office, and headship in his church, by the abounding prophanity, atheism and immorality of our day; the generality of professed christians their breaking his bands, and casting his cords from them? I cannot now stand to give a full narrative of the injuries have been done to the royal prerogative of this King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

The *Roman* antichrist has for a long time invaded the prerogative of the Son of God, by usurping a headship over the Church; *He sits in the temple of God, exalting himself above all that is called God.* At the imperfect reformation of *England*, when they threw off the Pope as head of the church, they lodged the same in the king, declaring him to be supream head in all cases civil or ecclesiastick. In the late days of *Scotland's* apostacy from God, the crown was sacrilegiously taken from Christ's head among us also, and set upon the head of a persecuting apostate. Dreadful were the invasions and encroachments that were made upon the crown-royal of the King of *Zion*, by kings, parliaments, and persons of all ranks, particularly by the act rescissory, whereby axes and hammers were lifted up upon the carved work of

of the temple, hewing down the glorious work of reformation, restoring abjured prelacy, rescinding the obligations of our solemn covenants, yea ordering them to be burnt at the cross of *Edinburgh*, by the hand of the common hangman, persecuting to the very death all that owned a work of reformation.

In these bloody days, the headship and sovereignty of Christ was contended for, by many of the Lord's worthies, even unto death; and it has been the peculiar honour of the church of *Scotland*, particularly in these days of persecution, to bear testimony unto Christ, as the alone Head and King of his church, in opposition unto these dangerous and heaven-daring encroachments that were made upon it. And it is much to be regreted and lamented, that since the Lord turned back our captivity, in any measure, at the late wonderful revolution, whereby we were freed from the yoke of lordly prelacy, we have not been so zealous for our great King, and his prerogatives, which were so much invaded, as might been expected, upon our deliverance from that *Egyptian* thraldom. I don't remember of any particular act of assembly, since the revolution, whereby the rights of the crown of Christ are asserted, in opposition to the incroachments that were made upon them in these days of publick apostacy and persecution. Yea, instead of that, are there not invasions and incroachments made upon the authority of Christ, and the immunities of his kingdom, even since that period, particularly in the end of Queen *Anne's*

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reign, when designs were form'd for the overthrow of a protestant succession; his headship and authority was invaded by an almost boundless toleration of all errors in doctrine and corruptions in worship, excepting popery and blasphemy against the Holy Trinity, two evils that never prevail'd more in the memory of man in these lands, than since the toleration act was pass'd. His authority was at the same time invaded by the act restoring patronages, whereby power is given to a malignant lord or laird to present a man, to take the charge of precious souls, who has perhaps no more concern about their salvation than the great *Turk*. And is it not matter of lamentation to see some of the judicatories of this church, whose province it is to contend for the sovereignty of Christ and the rights of his subjects, falling in with patrons and heritors of the nation, in opposition to the known rights of the christian people, to elect and choose their own pastors? How are the rights of the Lord's people invaded and trod upon by violent settlements, up and down the land? A cry is gone up to heaven against the builders, by the spouse of Christ, like that *Cant. v. 7. The watchmen that went about the city, found me, they smote me, they wounded me, the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.* A cry and complaint came in before the bar of the last assembly for relief, and redress of these and many other grievances, both from ministers and people; but instead of a due regard had thereto, an act is pass'd confining the power

of election unto heritors and elders, whereby a new wound is given to the prerogative of Christ, and the privileges of his subjects. I shall say the less of this act now, that I had opportunity to exoner my self, with relation to it, before the national assembly, where it was past; only allow me to say, that whatever church-authority may be in that act, yet it wants the authority of the Son of God. All ecclesiastical authority under heaven is derived from him; and therefore any act that wants his authority, has no authority at all. And seeing the reverend synod has put me in this place, where I am in Christ's stead, I must be allowed to say of this act, what I apprehend Christ himself would say of it, were he personally present where I am, and that is, that by this act, the corner-stone is receded from, he is rejected in his poor members, and the rich of this world put in their room; I say, were Christ here present, I think he would say with relation to that act, *In as much as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto me.* By this act Christ is rejected in his authority, because I can find no warrant from the word of God, to confer the spiritual privileges of his house upon the rich beyond the poor; whereas by this act, the man with the gold ring and gay cloathing, is prefer'd unto the man with the vile raiment and poor attire. I add further, that this act, I judge it inconsistent with the principles and practice of the best reformed churches, asserted in their publick *Confessions of Faith*, and particularly with

with the known principles of this church, since the reformation, asserted in our books of discipline, which we are bound by solemn covenant to maintain. I am firmly persuaded, that if a timely remedy be not provided, this act will very soon terminate in the overthrow of the church of *Scotland*, and of a faithful ministry therein, in regard, that the power of electing ministers, is thereby principally lodged in the hands of a set of men, who are generally disaffected to the power of godliness, to the doctrine, discipline, worship and government of this church, as well as to the government of our gracious sovereign King *George*, and the protestant succession in his family.

All sound presbyterians, who read the history of our forefathers, generally approve of the practice of Mr *Samuel Rutherford*, Mr. *James Guthrie*, and other worthy ministers of this church, who protested against the publick resolutions, as a thing inconsistent with our covenants, and prejudicial to the work of reformation, altho' thereby the door was only opened to malignants to come into places of civil or military trust; and we who live at this time of day, may see the pernicious effects these resolutions had in the church of *Scotland*: But what would our forefathers have thought, or what will succeeding generations think of this act of assembly, whereby malignants are vested, not with a civil or military, but with an ecclesiastical power, in the settlement of the generality of ministers through the church of *Scotland*? By which means the church of *Scotland*, and he

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sacred

sacred privileges are render'd exceeding cheap, even in the eyes of her avowed enemies, this being a compliment they neither expected nor desired at our hands. But after all, I have good reason to believe, that this act is far from being the mind of the generality of presbyteries through this national church, and therefore would gladly hope a seasonable stand shall yet be made against it, in order to prevent its pernicious consequences.

My last inference shall be in a word of exhortation. Are ministers of the Gospel builders of the church, and is it the great plot of heaven, to have Christ exalted as the head-stone of the corner? Then let me call and exhort my reverend brethren and fathers (and I desire to apply the exhortation to my self) to concur, with heart and hand, in lifting up the chief corner-stone, and making his name to be remembered unto all generations, that the people may praise him for ever and ever. However he has been or still is rejected by other builders, yet let us study to exalt him, saying one to another, oh, magnify the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together.

I shall not stay, after what has been said, to use many motives; only in so many words, let us consider the excellency of his person, and the relation he bears to us and others of our tribe or family, both by nature and office, he being *Immanuel, God with us*, ordained the great Prophet, Priest and King of the church, to answer the maladies and miseries of ignorance, guilt and bondage we are brought under, by the
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sin of the first *Adam*. Let us consider, that it is his Father's will, that all men should honour him as they honour the Father himself; yea, his Father has highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, and hath ordered that every tongue should confess that *Jesus is the Lord*, to the glory of his eternal Father. Let us consider, that this is the work of the Holy Ghost, the great scope of all his dictates in the word, and of all his graces, influences and operations in the heart, being to lift up this corner-stone, *John xvi. 14. He shall glorifie me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.* This is the work wherein angels delight to be employ'd: With what alacrity do they celebrate his nativity, and tell the tidings of it unto the shepherds. *Luke ii. 10. Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord*, and thereupon *ver. 13. A multitude of the heavenly host praise God, saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.* This was the work of all the prophets under the Old Testament, they all prophesied of him, testified of his sufferings, and of the glory that should follow. They were as so many harbingers, sent to prepare the world for the reception of this glorious person. — All the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, given by him unto the New Testament church have had this, as the great scope of their ministry, to edify the body of Christ, by lifting up the glory of this

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this head stone of the corner, Rev. iv. 10. In short this is and has been the business of the church militant here upon earth, and will be the work of the church triumphant thro' eternity. They all with one voice cry, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing*, Rev. v. 12. And is it not glorious encouragement to us, to lift up the honour of our Redeemer, when we have such good company to join us in our work.

Again, let us consider that Christ is the stone without which there can be no building, for he is the church's all. *Christ is all in all*. He is her light, her life, her righteousness, her strength, her peace, her food, her cloathing, her wisdom, her holiness. So that if he be wanting, all is wanting, and the church is ruined. We cannot answer the commission we bear from our great Master, if we do not exalt the chief corner-stone. 'Tis Christ whom we preach, Clos. i. 28. we are to be of Paul's spirit, to know nothing amongst our hearers, but Christ and him crucified, we are always to triumph in the revelation of Christ, so as the savour of his knowledge may be made manifest by us in every place. To conclude, We can never finish our course with joy, and the ministry we have received of the Lord, except this be the great scope of our work, whether in doctrine, discipline, worship or government. I shall shut up this discourse, with a few advices in order to our being successful builders of this glorious fabrick, whereof Christ is the head-stone of the corner.

1. Then

1. Then let us be aware of the fatal errors before mentioned, whereby the *Jewish* builders ruined their once glorious fabrick, and buried themselves in the ruines thereof. Let us beware of these doctrines vented in our day, which disparage the person of our glorious redeemer, and derogate from his supreme and independent deity, or his headship and sovereignty in his church. Let us beware of nauseating the spirituality of his doctrine, and the sublime mysteries of our holy religion, preferring thereunto the harangues of moralists. When we preach the law, let us open it in its extent and spirituality, so as to turn in its edge upon the heart and consciences, that it may be a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Let us preach up the everlasting righteousness of the Son, as the only ground of a sinner's justification, and beware of every thing that has the least tendency to foster a sinner in his hope of salvation by the works of the law. Let us beware of blocking up the door of access to Christ, by legal qualifications, which are no where to be had, but in Christ himself. Let us beware of formality either in preaching or praying, whereby we may deaden the ordinances of God, to our own souls or the souls of our hearers; and in order thereto let us take care to license or lay hands upon none, but such as in the judgment of charity we have reason to think, are acquainted with the power of godliness, even though they have been trained up in literature at the foot of a professor of Divinity. Let us beware of carnal policy in the matters of

of Christ's kingdom and glory. Let us beware of valuing our selves upon the favour of men, great or small. Especially let us take care, that we be not swayed in the matters of Christ with the favour of great men, for this has been a snare in *Missah* and a net spread upon *Taber*. Let us study impartiality in the exercise of discipline, and beware of turning the edge of it against them that deserve it least. And let us set our selves to stop these passages into the house of God, by which thieves and robbers most ordinarily enter, that the house of God be not turned into a den of thieves.

2. In order to our being successful builders, let us seek the builders word from the great master-builder; for there is a word which Christ gives his faithful ministers, whereby the art of building is much conveyed, *John xvii. 14. I have given them thy word.* Without this word from the mouth of Christ, we will never know the true art of building the church: By this word the man of God is made a perfect builder, thoroughly furnish'd unto every good work. And if you ask me, what is that word? I answer, it is an experimental acquaintance with the power of the word upon the soul, particularly the knowledge of that leading mystery, *God manifested in the flesh.*

3. Let us take care that every stone of the building correspond with the foundation and corner-stone; whatever doctrines or practices don't hang right with this regulating stone let that be cast. In order to which, let us examine our own and others doctrine and conversation by

by the plumb line and infallible rule of the Word. *To the law and to the testimony: If they speak not according to these things, it is because there is no truth in them, Isa. viii. 20.*

4. Let us observe the signs of the times, and whenever we discern the danger a coming, either from open enemies or pretended friends, let us give the cry, like faithful watchmen, and tho' fellow-builders be offended there is no help for that. 'Tis a heavy charge that is laid by God against some as above, that they were dumb dogs that could not bark, but preferred their own carnal ease unto the safety of the Church, *Isa. lvi. 10, 11, 12.*

5. Let us wrestle much at a throne of grace for the countenance of the great Master and assistance of his Spirit, for *except the Lord build the house, the builders build in vain. Paul may plant, and Appellos water, but 'tis God giveth the increase.*

F I N I S.

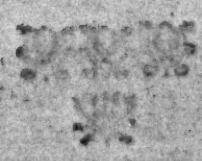


by the plain line and-invisible rule of the
Word. The latter answers the testimony: it is
not found not according to the things, it is
because there is no truth in them. This
is the way.

4. Let us observe the laws of the times, and
whenever we observe the danger of coming
either from open enemies or from hidden friends,
let us give the cry, like the faithful watchmen, and
that fellow soldiers who attended there is no
help for that. For a heavy change is now laid
by God, against those above, that they were
once those that could not back, but pictured
their own carnal eyes into the liberty of the
Church. (1st Cor. 11, 12.)

5. Let us watch much at a throne of grace
for the countenance of the great Master and al-
liance for his Spirit, for every the Lord
blessed the people, the faithful built in vain;
there was light and life, but the Spirit was
not given, the church was not.

F I N I S



*The Government upon CHRIST's
Shoulder:*

BEING A

SERMON

PREACH'D

*At Stirling, June 4th 1732, on
Sabbath Evening after the Sa-
crament.*

*By EBENEZER ERSKINE Minister
of the Gospel at Stirling.*

P R E F A C E.

READER,

THE following sermon having made a
great noise thro' this and several other
corners of the land: Lest any should
think the Author is ashamed of his doctrine he
there delivered, he allows it to come abroad to

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the world with the other. He had begun to preach from that text Isa. ix. 6. in November 30. 1731, and having spoke to the two first clauses, he took occasion June 4, 1732, viz. Sabbath evening after the celebration of the Sacrament at Stirling, to insist upon the clause immediately following, The government shall be upon his shoulder, as he has been insisting upon the following part of the verse ever since.

Some were of opinion, that the subject was unsuitable to the Occasion, after people had been at a communion table ; but it would appear, that such as think so, do not consider, that Christ did wade to the throne and government of his mediatory kingdom thro' blood. For my part I do not know how one can be better entertained, either at or immediately after he has been at the Lord's table shewing forth his death, than by letting him know, that he who was dead is now alive, and lives for evermore, having the keys of hell and death in his hand. What more comfortable to a believer than to hear that the Lamb slain is now in the midst of the throne, with the reins of government in his hand, especially in a day of trouble and of treading down, and of perplexity from the Lord God of Hosts in the valley of vision ?

Others judg'd it amiss on such an Occasion, to touch upon the Act of Assembly anent the settlement of vacant congregations, which had been past a few days before. All that is needful to be said in answer to which is, that the publick wound given by that act was fresh, and the hearts of the poor people of God bleeding, to
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ee themselves spoil'd by those who should been the guardians of their spiritual rights and privileges ; and what could be more proper than to pause the green wound, and pour in some of the healing balsam of gospel consolation, arising from the government of their great King, who rules in the midst of his enemies.

The author never pretended to deliver every particular word or sentence, contained in his notes, which, to him would be the greatest slavery and confinement. But as the sermon stood in his notes, so it comes abroad ; and he supposes that there will be but very inconsiderable variation. Only, the preamble when he enter'd upon the Text is added, without which it would have looked somewhat abrupt ; besides something he had not time that evening to overtake, at the end of the discourse. He preached two other sermons on the same Clause of the verse, the sabbath following, which there was no time to transcribe for the press, otherwise the discourse might been more perfect, and the omissions quarrelled by some been supplied.





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S E R M O N, &c.

Isaiah ix. 6. *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder : and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting father, The prince of peace.*



TH E great design of God in his whole works of creation and providence, is to manifest and make known the glory of his power, wisdom, goodness and greatness to the children of men. Hence is that of *David*, *Psal. xix.* from the beginning. *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge !* And if it be ask'd, what the great design of God is in the scriptures ? I answer, 'Tis just to bring a lost world to the knowledge of a Saviour, *Who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person :* All the prophecies, promises, histories and doctrines of the word, do point us to him, as the needle in the mariners compass points to the pole-star ; *To him bore all the prophets witness*

ness, and when the apostles under the New-Testament were sent unto all nations with the silver trumpet of the everlasting gospel in their mouths, what was the great theme of their sermons? It was just to make Christ known among the nations; he was the *Alpha* and *Omega* of their whole ministry; 'tis Christ, says *Paul* to the *Colossians*, whom we preach; and writing to the *Corinthians*, he declares, that *he desired to know nothing among them, but Christ and him crucified*. In short, firs, our preaching and your hearing is in vain, unless we bring you in to the knowledge of Christ and an acquaintance with him. *He is the foundation God hath laid in Zion, and another foundation can no man lay*. Our design in preaching, and yours in hearing, should be to make you truly gracious and religious, but how shall ever a man be acquainted with the power of godliness, if he be a stranger to him who is the great mystery of it, even *God manifested in the flesh*? How shall we ever fulfil the law as a covenant, but by acquaintance with him, *who is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth*? How shall we ever fulfill it as a rule, but by faith in him, *who is the glory of our strength*? And how shall we ever come to God, from whom we are separate, but by him *who is the way, the new and living way*, and without whom *there is no coming to the father*? So that all the lines of religion meet in him as their center. That I may commend him to you, I have read this text of scripture, which is as full of
Christ

Christ, as any that we meet with in the scriptures of truth, and the more of Christ be in any text, the more marrow and fatness, the more savour and sweetness will be in it, to the soul that knows him. *To us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, &c.*

The prophet in the close of the preceeding Chapter, having spoken of dark and dismal days of trouble and distress, comes in the beginning of this, to comfort and encourage the hearts of true believers, with the great and good things which were a coming in the days of the great *Messiah*; and there are three great New-Testament blessings he condescends upon.

First, Great light should spring up to a lost world, ver. 2. *The people that walked in darkness, have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.* This world, particularly of the *Gentile* nations, before the coming of Christ was a dungeon of darkness, it was a valley of the shadow of death, for want of the gospel-light, for *where no vision is the people perish*. But by the coming of Christ, whose goings forth were prepared as the morning, in the dispensation of the everlasting gospel, *life and immortality are brought to light*, on which account we in this land may join issue with *Zacharias* in his song, *Luke* i. 78, 79. *Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into*

into the way of peace. Oh ! that there were a suitable prizing of gospel-light, among these who have it in the external dispensation of it ; but alas, is not that word of Christ too applicable to many, *Light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.*

A second great New Testament blessing the prophet speaks of, is joy in the Lord. *ver. 3. Thou hast multiply'd the nation and not encreased the joy ; they joy before thee, according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice, when they divide the spoil :* The holy nation of the New Testament church would be multiply'd upon the promulgation of the gospel light, so that Christ should have the *dew of this youth*, by the *flowings in of the nations* unto the bosom of the church ; but yet the carnal joy of *Israel* should not be thereby encreas'd, like that of the *Jews*, when they sat under their vines, and under their fig trees, eating the milk and hony of the Land of *Canaan* ; yet there should be a bundance of spiritual joy in the Lord, which would put more gladness in the hearts of true converts, than the joy of the harvest, or of them that divide the spoil. *Observe*, That the joy of faith, which terminates in the person, righteousness, fulness of Christ, and the favour of God through him, infinitely exceeds all the carnal mirth and jollity of a transient world, which is but *like the crackling of thorns under a pot* ; the joy of faith is a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Spiritual liberty and freedom is the *third* New Testament blessing, that would follow the great Messiah. *ver. 4. 5. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burthen, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every battle of the warrior is with confus'd noise, and garments rolled in blood, but this shall be with burning and fewel of fire.* As Gideon was an instrument, in the hand of God, for breaking the heavy yoke of oppression, that *Midian* had wreathed about the neck of *Israel* of old; so Christ upon his coming like a mighty champion, should travel in the greatness of his strength, to deliver poor sinners from the hands of all their enemies, sin, satan, the world, and the curse of a broken law, unto which they were in bondage: But yet let it be observed, that there is a great disparity betwixt Gideon's way of rescuing *Israel* and Christ's way of delivering his people from their spiritual bondage, for Gideon at that time delivered *Israel* by the force of carnal arms, *with the confus'd noise of the warrior, and garments rolled in blood,* but the weapons of Christ's kingdom are not such; no, they are not carnal, but mighty thro' God to the pulling down of strong holds. Christ's kingdom is to be reared, and spiritual liberty brought about, by burning and fewel of fire, or by *the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning*, chap. iv. 4. that is, by the power of the spirit of Christ coming along with the dispensation of gospel-light, which would burn up and consume the lusts and corruptions of men, and
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all the works of the devil, even as fire consumes any combustible matter, that is cast into it.

Now if any should ask who is he, and where is he that shall do all these great things? Why, here you have an answer in the words of my text, *For unto us a Child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, &c.* The prophet, chap. vii. ver. 14. had told them that *a virgin should conceive, and bring forth a son, and they should call his name Immanuel*; now says he, this is he that shall do all these great wonderful things upon his appearance on the stage of time, for to us he is born, and to us he is given.

In the words we may notice these things following. 1st. The incarnation of the great Messiah, for here the prophet speaks of his birth. 2. His donation; he is the gift of God to a lost world, *To us a Son is given.* 3. His advancement to the supreme rule and authority, *The government shall be upon his shoulder.* 4. His character and designation in five names here given him, which shews, that he has a name above every name, *Wonderful, Counsellour, the everlasting Father, mighty God, and Prince of Peace.* 5. We have the relation he stands in to lost sinners of *Adam's* family; he is born to us, he is given to us, and not to the angels which fell. 6. We have the application and triumph of faith upon all this, for the church here lays claim to him, and triumphs in her claim, for the words are uttered in a way of holy boasting. *To us this Child is born, to us this Son is given*; much like the triumph of the spouse,

Cant. v. 16. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem. As if she had challeng'd the whole world to shew his match. I have discours'd already of the first two of these particulars, and now I go on to the third, viz. The authority wherewith Christ is vested in the church, by his Father's ordination, The government shall be upon his shoulder.

Sirs, Ye have this day been travelling with him to *Golgotha* and *Calvary*, where you might see him bearing his cross, yea nailed to it, and pouring out his soul unto death, in a way of satisfaction to justice for our sins; but now I would lead you unto *Mount Sion*, that ye may view him swaying the scepter of heaven; for the government is laid upon his shoulder, the father hath put all things into his hands for the good of his church. What is needful for the explication of these words, will occur in speaking to this doctrine, *That as the church is Christ's peculiar kingdom in this world, so the government hereof, is by the Father's ordination committed to him, or laid upon his shoulder.*

For confirmation of the doctrine, I need only repeat the words of the text, tho' many other scriptures might be adduc'd, which to gain time I wave at present, *To us a Child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder.* In discoursing of which doctrine, through divine assistance, I shall endeavour to do these things. I. I would offer a few thoughts anent the church or kingdom of Christ in the world. II. Speak a little

little of the government of his kingdom. III. How it is committed to him by his Father. IV. Why it is committed to him or laid upon his shoulder. V. Apply.

First, To offer a few thoughts anent the church or kingdom of Christ in this world. 1. then, By the church I understand that remnant of *Adam's* family, who being determin'd to break their covenant with hell, and their agreement with death, join themselves to Christ, as their Prophet, Priest and King, either in reality, or by a visible and credible profession of their faith in him. This remnant of *Adam's* family, as they are scattered through the world, make the church universal, and any particular members of this, whether in a nation, congregation, or family, are called particular churches, national, parochial, or domestick; but still these are but branches of the church universal, which makes the mystical body of Christ in the world. 2. The church or kingdom of Christ, during the Old Testament dispensation, was peculiarly confin'd to the posterity of *Abraham*, to the nation of the *Jews*, excepting a few gentile proselytes: But now since the coming of Christ in the flesh, and his resurrection from the dead, is extended also to the gentile nations, according to *Psal. ii. 8.* the partition wall being removed, and a door of faith opened to the gentiles, *Christ is now set for an ensign to the gentile world. Isa. xi. 10. And in that day, there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign to the people; to it shall the gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious.* 3. All the subjects of Christ's kingdom

and government, are originally brought out of the territories of hell, being *Children of wrath even as others*. Every man by nature comes into this world, wearing the devil's livery of original sin and of a depraved nature, till Christ in a day of power come and set the captive of the mighty at liberty; the strong man keeps the house, till Christ, who is the stronger, enter in and spoil him of his goods, and translate the poor soul from the power of darkness into his kingdom of light. 4. The great engine whereby Christ rears up a kingdom to himself in the world, is the preaching of the everlasting gospel, accompany'd with the power and efficacy of his spirit. This is call'd *the rod of his strength*, whereby he makes a *willing people*. *The gospel is the power of God unto salvation*, and it is by *these weapons, which are not carnal but mighty thro' God*, he casts down strong holds. 5. The church and kingdom of Christ being founded and governed by him, *in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid*, cannot miss of being one of the best regulated societies in the world as under his management, whatever irregularities may be found in her through the corruptions of men intermingling with the concerns of the kingdom. The church, because of her comely order and regularity, as she is moulded by her king in the midst of her, is compar'd unto a city lying four square, Rev. xxi. She is said to be *comely as Jerusalem, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth*. Every thing necessary to render any kingdom

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or society regular is to be found in the church or kingdom of Christ. As

1. A kingdom well constituted hath its laws, and so hath the church of Christ; and *the laws given by her King are all holy just and good,* and all the true subjects of the kingdom delight in the laws of their King, as being the transcript of infinite wisdom and equity.

2. A kingdom has its officers under its king, and so hath the church of Christ; for *he gave some apostles, some prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the church, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,* Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13. And 'tis by his officers or office-bearers that ye have been serv'd this day at his table, according to his direction.

3. A kingdom hath its courts, where the subjects attend to receive the will of the king, and the benefits of his administration; and so hath the church. *David speaking of the Old Testament church, and particularly of Jerusalem, a type of the New Testament church, tells us, There are the thrones of judgment; the thrones of the house of David, whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord to the testimony of Israel.* The church of Christ, even the church militant, hath her courts for government, where the key of discipline is exercised, and her courts for worship, where the doctrine, the ordinances of worship are dispensed.

4. A kingdom hath its seal; We hear frequently of the broad seal of the kingdom, which is commonly appended unto charters for their confirmation. So in the kingdom of Christ, he hath appended two publick seals unto the charter of his covenant of grace, *viz.* baptism and the Lord's supper, the last of which we have been this day dispensing unto you for the confirmation of your faith, as to the validity of the charter, and happy for ever is that man, who has got the internal seal of the sacrament, and privy seal of the Holy Spirit with it, for *he is sealed up to the day of redemption.*

5. A kingdom commonly hath its enemies to grapple with, both foreign and intestine; and so hath the kingdom of Christ, the gates of hell and its auxiliaries have in all ages been attempting to overthrow the kingdom of Christ in the world, the *Dragon* with his angels and armies make war against *Michael* and his angels, and the war between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent, like that betwixt *Amalek* and *Israel*, will never end while the world stands. But besides the foreign enemies the church of Christ hath to deal with, intestine enemies, corrupt officers, members, and ministers, pretending to build, and yet causing the work to cease, in as far as in them lies. Yea, the true subjects of this kingdom of Christ, have the enemy of a deceitful and corrupt heart within them, that is ready to join hand with the enemy that is more foreign. The kingdom of Christ is a theatre of continual war from the disturbances perpetually created by some of these enemies, and will

will be militant while in this world, for we wrestle not with flesh and blood only, but with principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places; and ye who have been this day in the banqueting-house, provide and prepare for the battle, &c.

6. A kingdom hath its armies and auxiliaries; and so hath the church of Christ, being in a confederacy with the Lord of Hosts; the armies of heaven are ready to fight her quarrel, and to step in to the assistance of the true believer, who is minting to fight the good fight of faith, under the conduct of the captain of salvation; and because all the subjects are soldiers, there is a suitable military equipage provided for them, *the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, &c.*

7. A kingdom hath its fortifications and strong holds; and so hath the church of Christ, *Isa. xxvi. 1. In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah, we have a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.* The strong ramparts of the kingdom are the divine attributes; for as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord encompasseth them that fear him. A God in Christ is the church's refuge, *Psal. xli. 1. God is our refuge, a very present help in trouble.*

The Second thing was to speak a little of the government and administration of the kingdom. What I have to offer as to this, take in the particulars following. 1st, Christ himself you see in the text is the great and glorious Governor,
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The government shall be upon his shoulder. Psal. ii. 6. Tet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. Micah v. 2. But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel: Whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting. Micah ii. 13. And their king shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them. Eph. i. 22, 23. He hath given him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. Oh how may the church of believers pride themselves in their king and governor, saying, The Lord is our defence, the holy one of Israel is our king, in him shall all the seed of Israel be justify'd, and shall glory. 2. All things in heaven, earth and hell are put under the power of Christ, for the more advantagious government of his church, Eph. i. 22, 23. just now quoted, and Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11. So that not only the government of the church, but the government of angels, men and devils, of all things visible and invisible are in the hand of Christ for the sake of his church. Hence is that promise or article of his latter will, Rom. viii. 28. All things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 3. Christ the king of Zion is wonderfully fitted by his father, for the government and administration: You read of his qualifications for it, Isa. ii. 2, 3, 4. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of council and might, the spirit

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of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord. And shall make him of quick understanding, in the fear of the Lord, and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears. But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth: And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. Oh! where was there ever such a well qualified governor? 'Tis impossible he can err in his administration; and what sweetens this is, that the qualifications of the king are communicable, and actually communicated unto all the loyal subjects of the kingdom, for he is not only a head of government but of influences, for out of his fullness do all we receive and grace for grace. 4. Christ's government and administration is very wonderful and surprizing; you see here that the name of that governor is *wonderful*. He is wonderful in his person, and wonderful in his administration, for by his skill of management in his kingdom, he brings light out of darkness, order out of confusion, life out of death, strength out of weakness, and therefore the subjects may be easy amidst the greatest apparent confusions, even though the mountains were removing, and heaven and earth mingling, for he is the Lord that doth wonders, and rules even in the raging of the sea, &c. 5. Christ's government and administration in and about his church and people is exceeding wise; so much is imported in his being call'd the counsellour. Wisdom and council are his, there is no searching

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ing out of his understanding. The deepest laid plots of hell are all open before him, for he discovers deep things out of darkness, and brings to light the shadows of death; he rules in the midst of his enemies, and turns all their councils to foolishness; and as for his loyal subjects, he will guide them by his council, and afterward bring them to glory. 6. Christ's government and administration is irresistible, for the governor is the mighty God, who will go thro' with his designs; who can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou? O let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, for her king in the midst of her is mighty, yea the almighty God, who is able to protect his servants, and is both able and resolved to destroy his enemies, High is his hand, and strong is his right hand, and his right hand doth ever valiantly. How valiantly did he spoil principalities and powers on the cross? And he is as valiant as ever. 7. Christ in the government of his church and people is exceeding tender and compassionate, for his name is the everlasting Father, with whom compassions flow, and his mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him. As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; he gathers the lambs in his bosom, and gently leads them that are with young; and in him the fatherless findeth mercy. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. 8. Christ's Government and administration of his church is very peaceable, for his Name is the Prince of peace, and of the increase of his go-
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government and peace there shall be no end. 'Tis true, he has told his subjects that in the world they shall have tribulation, but yet in him they shall have peace, for he hath overcome the world, and the peace he gives is such as the world can neither give nor take away, John xiv. 27. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you. 9. This government is everlasting, for of the Increase of his government there shall be no end. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion that which shall not be destroyed; his seed shall endure for ever, and his throne built up to all generations. Other kings dye, and their kingdoms moulder away into nothing; but he is the king eternal, immortal, and his kingdom endureth for ever. Thy throne O God is for ever and ever, the scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter. Judgment and justice are the habitation of his throne; and this is what renders his government everlasting, because this king doth rule in righteousness, and his throne is established in justice.

The Third thing was to enquire, how the government of the church is committed unto Christ, or laid upon his shoulder. Interpreters think, that in this expression there is an allusion to the antient custom of carrying the ensigns of government upon the shoulders of those who were invested with it, or of their officers. The plain meaning is, that the government and supreme authority of the church, whether militant or triumphant, is devolved upon him. An

expression much of the same import you have, *Isa. xxii. 22. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulders; so he shall open and none shall shut, and he shall shut and none shall open.* Now the government is committed to Christ, or laid upon his shoulder, with a three or fourfold solemnity. 1. With the solemnity of an unalterable decree. *Psal. ii. 6, 7. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree, the Lord hath said unto me, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.* Now, can this decree of heaven be reversed, or these mountains of brasse be overturned? No surely, *the counsel of the Lord shall stand;* and therefore the crown shall stand on the redeemer's head, and the government ly upon his shoulder. 2. With the solemnity of a covenant transacted betwixt him and his eternal Father, when the counsel of peace was between them both; and what is the issue of that grand counsel, which was held in heaven, from the antient ages of eternity? It was just, that *the man whose name is the Branch* should come out of his place, that he should bear the glory, and that he should sit and rule upon his throne, *Zech. vi. 13.* 3. With the solemnity of an oath, ratifying the determination of the counsel of peace in this matter. *Psal. lxxxix. 3, 4. I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant. Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations.* And
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you see *Jer.* 35. that in his oath he impignorates his holiness, the most orient and dazling jewel of his crown, for the greater security. *Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lye unto David,* i. e. I will as soon cease to be a holy God as turn my Son out of the government; no, it shall lye upon his shoulder, as long as I am holy, and that is for ever and ever.

4. The government is committed to him by a solemn election and investiture; he was elected to the government by his own Father and the joint concurrence of all the subjects, *Isa.* xlii. 1.

He is mine elect in whom my soul delighteth.

Psal. lxxxix. 15. *I have exalted one chosen out of the people, I have found David my servant, with my holy oyl have I anointed him.* And

the whole family of heaven and earth concur in the choice, without a contradictory voice. Hence

when he mounts the throne and ascends up on high, they all clap their hands, saying, as *Psal.*

xlvii. 5, 6. *God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet: sing praises to God,*

sing praises: sing praises unto our king, sing praises. That passage, *Rev.* v. 11, 12. is thought

by some judicious interpreters, particularly the great *Owen*, to have a respect unto the reception

Christ met with, when he returned to heaven and sat down on the throne in our nature; And

I beheld and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the

elders: And the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of

thousands; and what say they? How cordially do they give their vote, that he should reign?

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Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

The *Fourth* thing was to give the reasons of the doctrine; Why is the government laid upon his shoulder? I answer, 1. Because his shoulder alone was able to bear the weight of the administration and government of the church. They who usurp the administration, take too much upon them, 'tis a burthen too heavy for angels or archangels; how then shall sinful worms bear it? God the Father saw, that none in heaven or earth but his own eternal Son was match for such a province; and therefore commits it to him, with a promise of his own assistance in the government. *Psal. lxxxix. 1. I have laid help upon one that is mighty. — I have found him. — I have anointed him. — With whom my hand shall be established, mine arm also shall strengthen him.*

2. It is laid upon his shoulder, or committed to him, that he might be in better capacity for accomplishing the salvation of his people, and bringing many sons and daughters into glory; hence we find his kingdom and salvation frequently joined together. *Thou art my king of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth; and Zech. ix. 9. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout O daughter of Jerusalem: Behold thy king cometh unto thee, just and having salvation.* Let his kingdom be never so low, his subjects in the worst of bondage and misery, whether as to the external or internal man, if
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their governor and king give but the word of command, immediately deliverance comes. *Psalm. xlv. 4. Thou art my king, O God command deliverance for Jacob.* His command dried up the red sea, divided *Jordan*, and brought *Israel* into the promised land.

3. The government is laid upon his shoulder, *that he may still the enemy and the avenger*, that he may resent his Father's quarrel against Satan, and entirely bruise his head, for his defacing and striking at his and his Father's image in our first parents, and disturbing his government, which he had established in innocence. Christ's great business, when he appeared in this world in person, and when he appears in the dispensation of the gospel, and power of his spirit, is to destroy the works of the Devil, to rear up his own kingdom, in the ruin of the old serpent and his seed. Hence it is, that when he takes the field, he gives the shout of war against that enemy and all that join him, *Isa. lxiii. 4. The day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redemption is come.*

4. The government is laid upon his shoulder, or committed unto him, because he hath a just title unto it. As 1. He has a title to it by birth, he is God's first-born, and therefore *he will make him higher than the kings of the earth*; yea, he is *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*. He has a title to it by purchase; he hath redeemed his church by his own blood, and therefore has the best right to govern her, his cross was the way in which he came to the crown, he suffered
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and then entered into his glory. 3. He has a right to it by his Father's promise and charter, granted him upon the footing of his death and satisfaction, *Isa. liii. 12. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong: Because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and* *Phil. ii. 8. 9, 10.* we are told that because he endured the cross and despised the shame, therefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name. 4. He has a title to it by conquest; he invades the territories of the God of this world, sets up his standard within his dominions, and spoils principalities and powers, sets the captives of the mighty at liberty, he travels in the greatness of his strength, shewing himself mighty to save, subduing sinners, and bringing every thought into captivity into his obedience; and because he doth so, therefore the government is committed to him, and laid upon his shoulder.

The *Fifth* thing was the application of the doctrine. The first use may be of information in the following particulars. Is it so, that the government is laid upon the shoulders of the Redeemer, by the ordination of the Father? See hence,

I. The wonderful love of God which he bears to his church and people, in providing such a ruler and governour for them. I remember the Queen of *Sheba*, *1 Kings x. 9.* in her address to *Solomon*, she says, *Because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king*

king to do judgment and justice. So well may we say here, because the Lord loved his church and people, therefore he made his own eternal Son King in the midst of her, and laid the government upon his shoulders. O! what a wonderful evidence of his love is this? And should not this make the under-governours of the church very tender, and take heed of ruling with rigour, and to be aware of what rulers they set over her?

2. See hence, what a happy government and administration, believers, the saints of God, are under, *viz.* the government of the child born and the son given to us, whose name is the Wonderful, Counsellour, &c. The Queen of *Sheba*, in the place now cited, *1 Kings* x. 8. when she saw the glory of *Solomon*, and the wisdom of his administration, her spirit fails her, and *ver.* 8. she cries out, *Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants who stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom. But, behold a greater than Solomon is here.* *Solomon* and all his wisdom and glory was but a faint type of the glory and wisdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the glory of his person and administration, and therefore upon far better ground we may say of the subjects of Christ's kingdom, as *Moses* did of *Israel*, *Deut.* xxxiii. 29. *Happy art thou, O Israel: Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, who is the sword of thy excellency!*

3. See hence the misery of a wicked unbelieving world, who will not have him to rule

over them, on whose shoulders the government is laid, but break his bands, and cast away his cords from them; why, he that sits in heaven shall laugh at their impotent attempts against the government of his son, and he hath authorized him to break all that will not bow to his government; *thou shalt break them as with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel.* Even the great potentates, who will not stoop unto him, he will cut them off, *for he cuts off the spirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth, and strikes them through in the day of his wrath, &c.*

4. Is it so, that the government is laid upon his shoulders? Then see the nullity of all acts, laws and constitutions that don't bear the stamp of Christ, and that are not consistent with the laws and orders he has left for the government of his church; they cannot miss to be null, because Zion's king never touch't them with his scepter, they want a foundation in the word of God: And unless acts and laws are founded there, they have no foundation at all, because there is no church authority, but what is derived from him.

5. See hence, that they run a very dangerous risque who do injury to his subjects, or strip them of any of the rights, privileges, or immunities he has granted them, and purchased for them, with the price of his blood. Among other privileges which Zion's king hath allowed his subjects, this is none of the least, that they should have the choice of their pastors; for which cause he has required them to try the
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spirits and gifts ministers are endowed with, whether they be calculate for the edification of their souls, *John iv. 1.* 'Tis a command not given unto heritors and elders only, but even to little children, young men and fathers. *Beloved*, says he, *believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, viz. of ministers and preachers, whether they be of God*; and the reason he gives is remarkable, in the close of the verse, *Because many false prophets are gone abroad into the world.* And in a suitableness to this trying of the spirits of the prophets, we find *Acts vi.* that it was the multitude of disciples, that by express order are commanded to chuse out from among them men full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom. The apostles, the extraordinary officers in the church, and who, one would think, were the most competent judges of men full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, yet they would not take that power upon them, which is now lodg'd in heritors and elders. I fear, the partiality shown in our publick acts, in preferring the great, the noble, the rich man with the gay cloathing, before the poor of this world, whom generally God hath chosen, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, lay a foundation for a controversy between God and this nation, which will not soon be at an end. Christ's little ones are but little regarded now a days, but they who maltreat them, to gratify the greatest upon earth, will smart for it in the issue. It is an awful word uttered by him, upon whose shoulders the government is laid, *Matth. xviii. 6, 7.* *But whoso shall offend one of these*

little ones which believe in me, it were better for him, that a milstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea. Wo to the world because of offences, for it must needs be that offences come: But wo to that man by whom the offence cometh.

6. If the government be upon his shoulders, then hence I infer, that they have a hard task to manage, who attempt to juggle him out of his government, and take it upon their own shoulders.

Quest. Who are these? I answer 1. *Papists*, who set up the man of sin to be the head of the church, calling him Christ's vicar. He is antichrist, whom Christ will destroy with the breath of his mouth and the brightness of his coming. 2. *Prelatists* who set up arch bishops and diocesan Bishops in the church of Christ, officers whom Christ never ordain'd in his kingdom, or never were warranted by his word: We read of no officer under the New Testament superior to a presbyter, and therefore arch bishops and bishops have no warrant in the word, and can be none of the officers of Christ's kingdom. 3. *Erastians* who take the government off Christ's shoulders, and lay it upon the civil magistrate, putting it in his power to cast the government of the church of Christ into what mould and fashion is most agreeable unto his worldly interest. What an affront is it done unto the Son of God, to have any mortal man declared head in all cases not only civil but ecclesiastical? This was an usurpation upon the crown of Christ under some former reigns, which
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I'm afraid is never yet cleanly abrogated or abolished to this day. 4. These potentates, who take upon them to tolerate any doctrines or any worship inconsistent with the doctrine, worship or government Christ hath established in his kingdom. 5. These profess'd presbyterians, who under that disguise exercise a lordly prelacy and dominion over the church of Christ, in thrusting in men upon congregations without, and contrary to the free choice their great King has allowed them. I fear there shall be a sad reckoning ere all be done, for the violent rapes which are committed upon the spouse of Christ up and down the land. Christ mystical is wounded in the house of his professed friends; and it will be a wonder if there be not wounds for wounds, before the scene be ended. For 7. If the government be upon Christ's shoulder, then hence I infer, that all odds will be even, and that Christ will render tribulation to those that trouble; vex, and harass his poor people, in their spiritual rights and privileges. He will arise for the sighing of the poor, and the cries of the needy; and O when he doth arise, the vengeance of his temple will fall heavy upon the heads of those who spoil it.

I conclude with an use of consolation, to the poor people of God, particularly to these that are spoiled of their liberties and privileges as christians; for tho' they be forsaken of them whose business it is to take the greatest care of them, yet they are not forsaken of their God; and our commission leads us particularly to preach the gospel to the poor, to comfort them that mourn
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in *Zion*, to give them beauty for ashes, and the oyl of joy for mourning. We are to strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. There are these few grounds of consolation I offer you in your present circumstances. As

First, Your God does not stand as an unconcerned Spectator of the injuries that are done you at this day; no, he is observing, and resents the spoil that is committed upon you. You may read for this a challenge, and an awfull challenge given on their behalf, *Isa. iii. 12, 13, 14, 15.* *As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them: O my people, they which lead thee, cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths. The Lord standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people. The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof: for ye have eaten up the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord of hosts.*

2. Know for your comfort, that God hath founded *Zion*. This is a topick of consolation, which is particularly presented unto the poor of his people, and accordingly to be told by the messengers of the nations, *Isa. xiv. 32.* *What shall one then answer the messengers of the nations? (viz. when they are enquiring about the state and circumstances of God's Israel, in a dark and drumbly day like this) The answer is, that the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it, i. e. Let it be proclaimed to the world, that*

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he who laid the foundation of *Zion*, will build her up; and when he doth so, he will appear in his glory, and his poor people, however at under, shall trust in it as an unshaken truth, that he who founded *Zion*, will take care of her, and of these who espouse her Cause.

3. Know that he who hath the government upon his shoulders, rules in the midst of his enemies, and has so much of the art of government, that he both can, and will bring good out of evil, advantage to his poor people out of things tending to their hurt and prejudice. *Jacob's* sons conspire against the life of their brother, they sell him into the hands of the *Ismaelitish* merchants; they in all this had no other view but to satisfy their lust of revenge; however God meant it for good, as was proved by the event.

4. Know that the most dark and cloudie-like dispensations, toward the church and people of God, are in the event found to have been pregnant with love and mercy; he who hath the government upon his shoulders turns them so about, as they are made to understand his loving kindness in all these things.

5. Know for your comfort, that he on whose shoulders the government is laid, hath power to provide you with honest ministers, notwithstanding of all the bars that lye in the way of your being comfortably provided; yea his power is cast into a promise that you may act faith upon it, *Isa. xxx. 20, 21. And tho' the Lord give you bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy*

thy teachers: And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the Way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left. Jer. iii. 15. I will give you pastors according to mine heart, that shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. Our great Governour hath the stars in his right hand, and he calls them forth by name, and therefore be not afraid, only believe.

But now to shut up this discourse, I shall 1 Tell you some of the secrets of Christ's government.
2. Offer a few advices to the Lord's people.

First, A few secrets of Christ's government with respect to his people in this world. As 1. That his publick management in providence seems many times to interfere with his promise; as in the case of *Abraham* his being commanded to sacrifice his son, the promise made of the kingdom to *David*, &c. 2. His acts of government have a light as well as a dark side. No affliction for the present is joyous but grievous, but afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. 3. There is a pleasant regularity in all his government, however perplex'd it may appear unto us; and when the work is done, beauty will arise out of it, as out of the *Chaos* arose a beautiful world. 4. In his administrations he hath long fetches, which we are not able to discover, or see to the end of at first instance, it is only some links and not the full chain of providence that lyes open to us; God must have his own time to finish his work. 5. His administrations many times take very surprizing turns, as when *Israel* was brought to

to the borders of *Canaan*, and they expecting, immediately, to enter upon the possession of the promised land, and yet are sent back to measure the hills of the wilderness for the space of forty years. When the designs of his administration seem to be brought to the birth, some new occurrence may cast up, which to our view seems to render all abortive. 6. These acts of his government, which seem to us to portend utter ruin to the church and his kingdom in the world, are found to be the very means for their deliverance and outgate. No step of providence so much hastened *Joseph's* preferment, as that of his being cast into prison, and laid under fetters of iron; *Israel's* pinch at the red sea was the time of the Lord's appearing for their delivery, and the ruine of *Pharaoh* and his host.

Secondly, I conclude with a few advices to the subjects of *Zion*, especially in this day of trouble and treading down. 1. Keep the keys of faith fixed on him, who holds the helm, and believe, with an assured faith, that the Lord doth reign for ever, even thy God O *Zion*, unto all generations. He that reigns is *Immanuel* God with us, not a God against us, but with us, or upon our side, *Psal. xlix. The Lord of hosts is for us, the God of Jacob is our refuge, therefore will we not be afraid, tho' mountains be removed.* 2. Keep the promise made to the Church in your view, in the midst of the darkest dispensations, and do not pore so much upon what is before you in the course of providence, as upon the promise; for no man can know God's love or hatred by what is before him;

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but the promise is the very picture and immediate product of his infinite mind. *David*, by poring upon the external conduct of providence, is almost carried down the stream, to atheism and irreligion, *Psal. lxxiii. 13.* till he went to the sanctuary and consulted the oracles of the word. 3. *Wait on the Lord and do not make haste, for the Lord is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him; they shall not be ashamed.*

4. Commit your way to the Lord, even when you walk in the midst of darkness, trust in the name of the Lord, and stay your selves upon your God, and so ye shall be kept in perfect peace, and integrity and uprightness shall preserve you. Keep your selves in the love and fear of God, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our saviour Jesus Christ, when all the seeming crooks of his government shall be made even.

F I N I S.



